847 married life (in Pshavia, not before the third year[36]). The second child may not see the light of day till the seventh year after marriage, and the third child (just as in Pshavia[37]) must be the last.[38] We called the practice "thoroughly un-Georgian" because it is resorted to only when the mountaineers consider it unavoidable. The indescribable poverty of their land "drove" them to this painful extinction of baby girls. It was this same poverty that led the neighbouring South Ossetes (the Tualti, inhabitants of Nar, Tib, Mamisson and other *auls*) in the eighteenth century to expose or strangle their infant girls and to sell their boys into slavery in spite of their great longing for male children.[39] In Ossetia, [732] before the Revolution, physically deformed babes would be choked to death immediately after birth, without even being shown to the mother. Such deformed infants were killed regardless of sex, for the Ossetes believed that such infants owe their existence to evil spirits. Similarly, even today, deformed colts, calves and lambs are killed immediately after birth, because "they come from the evil spirits."[40] We have already mentioned that some Georgian mountaineers kill their baby girls in the belief that the next child will infallibly be a boy.[41]

§ 5. OTHER BIRTH CUSTOMS

1. The Couvade

846 The couvade, to my knowledge,[42] is not practiced anywhere in North Caucasia. We do find it among the SOUTHERN CAUCASIANS, where not a few traces of an ancient mother-right culture have survived. The couvade is upposed to be practiced by the Yassai of Sakataly primeval forest, southwest of Daghestan,[43] and according to Strabo by the West Iberians.[44]

2. Circumcision

304 This custom, wherever it is found in the Caucasus, is doubtless of Islamic origin.[45] The Mohammedan Ossetes were greatly averse to the practice till the mullahs succeeded in convincing them that all uncircumcised persons would have to spend their eternity without a head.[46]

---

[36] Makalatija, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[37] *ibid.*

[38] Hahn, *Bilder aus dem Kaukasus*, pp. 73 f.

[39] Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 189.

[40] Pëtlina, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[41] *Supra*, p. 140.

[42] Unfortunately L. M. Melikset-Bekov's study on the couvade in the Caucasus (*K voprosu ob obqine kuvady na Kavkaze v svjazi s jazykovymi perežitkami matriarchatu*) is not at my disposal.

[43] Esad-Bey, *Der Kaukasus, Seine Berge, Völker und Geschichte*, p. 103.

[44] Strabo, iii.4, 17. Cf. N. Marr, *Der japhetische Kaukasus und das dritte ethnische Element im Bildungsprozess der mittelländischen Kultur*, p. 72; A. Baschmakoff, *Cinquante siècles d'évolution ethnique, etc.*, p. 85.

[45] For example, in Daghestan (cf. Reineggs, *op. cit.*, I, p. 191).

[46] Pëtlina, *op. cit.*, p. 97.